DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 399 629 EA 027 874

AUTHOR Ashenden, Dean
TITLE Australian Schooling: Two Futures. A Paper Prepared for the National Industry Education Foundation.
INSTITUTION National Industry Education Forum, Melbourne (Australia).
PUB DATE Oct 94
NOTE 28p.
PUB TYPE Viewpoints (Opinion/Position Papers, Essays, etc.) (120)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Accountability; Decentralization; *Educational Assessment; Educational Finance; *Educational Improvement; Educational Quality; Elementary Secondary Education; Equal Education; Foreign Countries; Performance; *Resource Allocation; School Restructuring; Standards; Teacher Qualifications
IDENTIFIERS *Australia

ABSTRACT

Schools represent a major social investment in Australia. Assessment of Australian schools' performance depends on how one defines what they should be doing and on how well they can be expected to do it. In the official account, schools are of "high quality and modest cost" when compared with their own past and other school systems. An alternative view, however, assigns Australian schools with an equivocal rating. This paper considers current conditions and trends in schools from each of these different points of view. This second alternative view suggests that the goals of the "official" reform agenda are unlikely to be met, and that a different and more ambitious approach is required. The new approach might include: (1) national targets for improved levels and distribution of attainment; (2) work place and work force reform; (3) changes in the governing structures of schooling (a shift to a devolved, regulated market); and (4) substantial increases in public and private funding to schooling and redistribution of resources according to need. Neither of the two views is clearly right or wrong. The first view is vulnerable to the charge that it is not able to produce the kind of schooling required now and in the future. The second can be criticized as being too ambitious in current and likely future economic and political circumstances. Six figures are included. (Contains 47 references.) (LMI)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED 399 629

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☑ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

S Searls

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

By Dean Ashenden

Ashenden Milligan Pty Ltd

October, 1994

EA027 874

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

National Industry Education Forum

AUSTRALIAN SCHOOLING: TWO FUTURES

A paper prepared for the National
Industry Education Foundation

by
Dean Ashenden

Ashenden Milligan Pty Ltd
September, 1994

CONTENTS

Executive summary 3

Introduction 5

The official account of schools and policies 6
- Universal provision 6
- Standards 6
- Inequality 7
- The workforce 7
- Accountability 8
- National approach 8
- System restructuring 8
- Resources 8
- In sum 9

Alternative views of schools and policies 10
- Standards 10
- Inequality 11
- Restructuring schools 14
- The workforce 15
- System change 17
- Policy implications 17
  - Targets 18
  - Workplace and workforce reform 18
  - Change in governing structures 19
  - Resources 21
- An achievable agenda? 22

Implications for policy on schooling 23

Figures

1 Achievement levels for reading: Victorian English profiles 10

2(a) Estimated Year 12 completions by SES decile, Australia 1989 12

2(b) Occupation of fathers of newly-enrolled students, Monash University, Clayton 12

3(a) Needs-based resource allocation ratios, Edmonton, Canada 13

3(b) Needs-based resource indices, Netherlands primary schools 14

4 Proportion of top and bottom quartile scorers commencing undergraduate courses, by field of study, 1989 16

Executive summary

In the 'official' account, Australian schools are of 'high quality and modest cost' when compared with their own past and other school systems. Recent years have seen spectacular increases in the proportion of students completing 12 years of schooling; standards of student achievement maintained over a period when the curriculum has broadened and demands on it have increased; substantial improvement in the educational experience and outcomes of girls together with a significant contribution by schools to the construction of a genuinely multi-cultural society; improvements in the professional preparation and qualifications of the teaching workforce; major reforms in the organisation and operation of government school systems ranging from 'de-zoning' to the de-centralisation of resource use; and the emergence of a national agenda for the continuing improvement of schooling which includes national goals, a national assessment and reporting framework, and improved articulation of schooling, further education and training, and employment.

An alternative view asserts that things are much less rosy than this account suggests. It argues that in an industry almost completely dependent on its teachers, the workforce is in poor and probably worsening condition; that much of the effort of students goes into learning things which are neither enabling nor enlightening; that many students leave school badly under-educated and under-skilled; that poor and un-successful learning is very unequally distributed across social groups and that little progress on this problem has been made despite 30 years of effort; that the organisation and culture of the 'schooling workplace' is inefficient and, much more important, not capable of producing the kind of intellectual, personal and social capacities now needed by children and young people; and that the systems responsible for most Australian schools have declining steerage capacity, moral authority, and resources.

This second view implies that the goals of the 'official' reform agenda are unlikely to be met, and that a different and more ambitious approach is required. It might include:

(1) National targets for improved levels and distribution of attainment, particularly in conceptual development, and in the development of social, personal and other skills.

(2) Workplace and workforce reform, focussing on re-designing the process and circumstances in which student work is done. Substantial changes in the organisation and use of the paid workforce would be required, these entailing reforms to industrial agreements and conventions.

(3) Changes in the governing structures of schooling, including greater but carefully judged replacement of bureaucratic centralism by a devolved, regulated market combined with greater accountability for and rewards to performance by individuals and institutions.

Introduction

Three million of Australia's 17 million people head off to school each working day, and most will spend about a quarter of their working lives there. For each, much in the future as well as the present depends on how well they do at school — income, status, and work satisfaction, certainly, and perhaps also image of and respect for self. However difficult it might be to pin down the effects of schools and schooling on the culture, the social order and the economy, there is little doubt that the effects are there, and important. Schools represent a major social investment. They employ one quarter of a million people and cost (in 1991-92) 13.4 billion dollars, absorbing (in 1991-92) around 3.4% of the GDP. (Maglen et al, 1994, p 162. National Report on Schooling in Australia for 1992, Annex).

How are Australian schools performing? And where are they headed? Answers depend on what we think schools should be doing, and on how well they can be expected to do it.

In what might loosely be called the 'official' view, expressed in actions and plans of systems authorities, in policies canvassed and coordinated through the Ministerial Council on Employment, Education, Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA), and in the annual National Report on Schooling in Australia (NRSA), schools are doing well and are headed in the right directions. Certainly if Australian schools are compared with their own past or with overseas systems, they show up well. They are, as a recent NIEF report agreed, of 'high quality and modest cost'. (Tannock, quoted in Maglen et al, 1994, p 180).

But if the reference point is what schools can be and may need to be in the future, Australian schools and policies for them earn a much more equivocal report card.

This paper will consider current condition and trends in schools from each of these rather different points of view. It concludes with a brief discussion of the contrasting implications of these viewpoints for policy.

The 'official' account of schools and policies

A good case can be made out that Australian schools are performing well and are headed in the right direction. The case can be summarised as follows.

Universal provision

Australian schools now provide a full 12 years of education for most students. This represents, among other things, a remarkable achievement. In the ten years from 1981 the proportion of students completing 12 years of schooling doubled, from 30.6% to 71.3% (NRSA Annex, p 18) and now compares well with school systems in other OECD countries.

This very rapid change in participation rates has raced ahead of change in the content, style and purposes of school education, particularly in the senior years. Students going on to higher education courses have been reasonably well served, but the rather larger numbers who do not, have not. But the curriculum is responding to the 'new stayers', and already offers a range of applied studies (there are more Victorian Year 12 students enrolled in Psychology than in Physics, for example). Policies now being put in place will shift Australian post-compulsory schooling from its domination by a rather scholastic and excluding curriculum to a much more diverse system. A broad range of vocational pathways, supported by a new kinds of study and a new system of certification, will link school, training and structured work experience. Initial evaluations of pilot work-study combinations reveal a very positive response by young people. (MCEETYA, 29 April 1994). By the end of the century schools will be part of a coordinated system which will see 95% of young people in education or training.

Standards

Standards of learning in Australian schools have not declined, and generally compare well with student attainments in other countries. Detailed comparison of performance in mathematics and science showed, for example, that standards overall have held up over time, and that performance was at or above the middle of a group of 10 countries. (Maglen et al, pp 168-9). This has been achieved over a period when the breadth and goals of curriculum have expanded considerably.

Moreover, school systems are now moving to improve standards of learning, especially in the core areas, at levels ranging from early intervention programs (such as the Western Australian First Steps program) to remedial and recovery programs in the secondary years. Perhaps most important, ways of defining and monitoring expected standards of achievement are improving. 'Australia is already at the forefront of efforts to design and introduce new approaches to testing at the State level', according to an authoritative review conducted for the NIEF, '(and) has the capacity to provide a model of assessment programs for education systems throughout the world'. (Masters, 1994, p vi).

Inequality

Participation in schooling is relatively equally spread across social groups. Schools, together with the tertiary education system, have been ahead of other institutions in achieving equality for women and girls. In only a generation or so massive under-representation of females in the senior years of schooling and therefore in higher education has been overcome.

Schools have also been successful in opening up education and therefore employment opportunities to children from migrant families, and particularly those from non-English speaking background. Participation and success in schooling by Aboriginal children remains far short of acceptable, but is also very much higher than was the case only a decade ago. There are marked social class differences in attainments at school and therefore in access to tertiary places, but these also are not as great as is sometimes claimed. While 82% of the children of families in the top third of the socio-economic scale complete Year 12, so do 65% of children from the bottom third. (National Report on Schooling in Australia, 1992, Annex, p 21).

Improving equality of opportunity and outcomes continues to be a major focus of policy at the school, system and national levels. Recent research suggests that teachers (although not schools) are much more effective in combating the effects of social background on student achievement than has often been supposed. (Hill, Holmes-Smith and Rowe, August 1993, p 31, and passim). Agreed national strategies for the education of girls, for equity in schooling, and for Aboriginal education are in place.

Some systems are moving beyond special programs for targeted groups to more comprehensive policies to monitor the achievement of all students and to distribute resources across systems on the basis of need.

The workforce

The workforce of schools is better qualified than ever before. In 1963 nearly half of Australia's teachers were two-year trained and only three in 100 were four-year trained. By 1989 less than 20% were two-year trained and the proportion of four-year trained had multiplied 10 times to 30%. (Logan at al, 1990, p 12-13). There is evidence to suggest that most teachers are positive about their work environment and that morale is generally good. (Hill, Holmes-Smith and Rowe, August 1993, p 17, p 29). The competencies of beginning teachers have been specified for the first time, and competency standards will influence pre-service teacher education.

In-service programs are being overhauled. There is more emphasis on skills development, more learning in the workplace, and much more local control. In the NSW government system, for example, the proportion of expenditure on professional development controlled at the school level grew from zero to more than 60% in the three years to 1992. (National Report on Schooling in Australia, 1992, p 40). The new Advanced Skills Teacher (AST) position provides a career path and recognition for teachers who want to stay in the classroom rather than move into administration.

Accountability
Schools and systems are now more accountable for their performance than ever before. Progress is especially marked in the public systems, where school councils have been established and given steadily expanding powers and responsibilities. The relaxation or abolition of zoning has exposed public schools to 'consumer power'. Government subsidies to non-government schools means that Australian public schools are exposed to competition from other schools and school systems to an unusual degree.

Many systems conduct or will soon begin assessment of student performance in key areas, and will provide the results to parents and to the public. Quality assurance mechanisms are being developed in several systems. There is an annual 'report card' on Australian schooling, which includes a profile of the condition of government and non-government schooling in each state. Perhaps most impressively, there is un-precedented national agreement as to what all Australian students can be expected to do and learn during their years at school. The Australian curriculum profiles (ACPs) provide the basis for comprehensive monitoring of student performance from the individual and the classroom to system and perhaps even national levels.

National approach
There is now a national approach to key issues in schooling. Policies on schooling, post-school education and training, and employment are nationally coordinated. Schooling remains a constitutional responsibility of the states and territories, but systems cooperate to an unprecedented degree. There is for the first time a statement of national gaols for schooling. A national audit of curriculum led to the development of the ACPs which provide a broadly common reference point for curriculum development. Over the 1980s the Australian Education Council expanded its role as a forum and mechanism for national policy. Its recent incorporation within MCEETYA signifies the increasing integration of policy on schooling with policy on other areas of the national life. There are a national industrial and professional bodies for teachers, and national competency standards for beginning teachers.

System restructuring
Government school systems are undergoing fundamental change. As already noted, zoning has been relaxed or removed, providing parents and students with choice between schools and school types. Systems of authority are being de-centralised. The long arm of system authority, the inspectorate, has everywhere disappeared. Head offices have been down-sized, and the numbers of levels of authority reduced. School councils have been introduced in all systems, and their role expanded. Some systems are now moving toward 'one-line' budgets at the school level, giving schools un-precedented scope and responsibility for decisions at the site level.

Resources
Australian schools have performed well and changed rapidly on a modest budget. Taken overall, government expenditure on schooling has been maintained

throughout the recession but by international standards levels of expenditure have not been high. Australia spent (in 1991-92) 3.4% of its GDP on schooling, less than the OECD average (4.0%) and far less than the top-ranked Sweden (5.1%). (Maglen et al, 1994, page 159, 162). Nonetheless, student:staff ratios, which improved dramatically through the mid-1960s and 1970s, continued to improve over the 1980s, albiet at a much slower rate.

In sum

In short, there is a good case to be made out that the Australian school system is 'high quality and modest cost' (Tannock, quoted in Maglen et al, 1994, page 180), and that there is a coherent policy agenda for continuing improvement

Alternative views of schools and policies

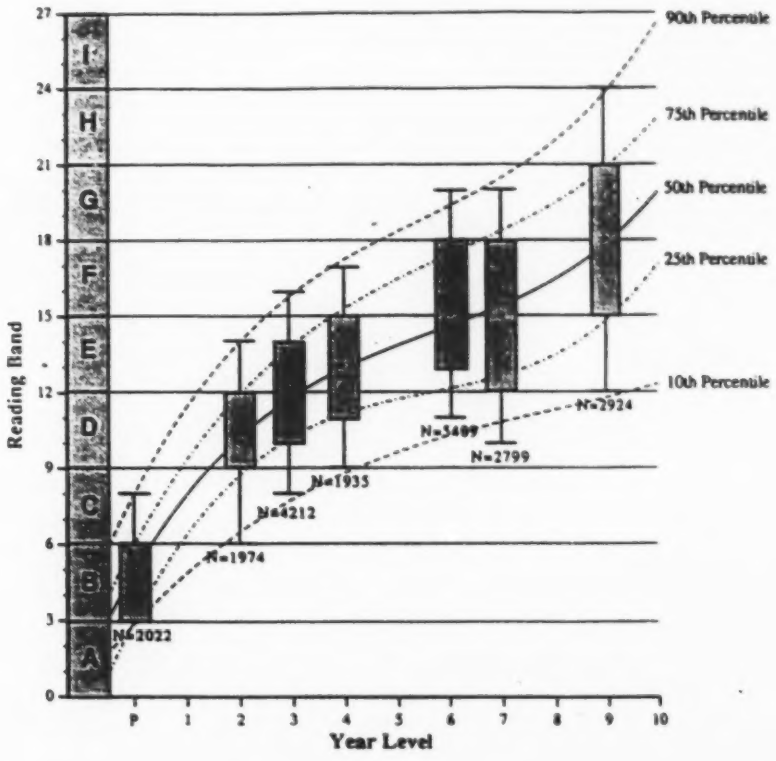
There are, of course, views of Australian schooling and schooling policy which are very different from the 'official' view. What is surprising, perhaps, is the number of sources of alternative accounts and the extent to which they differ from the picture sketched so far.

Standards

It is possible to agree that standards have not fallen and still ague that standards are not nearly good enough, and that current policies will not generate the improvement required.

The evidence suggests that most primary students and teachers enjoy their work, and that learning proceeds steadily. But even though things go well on the whole, they go badly wrong for some. By the end of the primary years there is a wide and steadily expanding spread of attainment.

Figure 1: Achievement levels for reading: Victorian English Profiles



Source: Hill, 1994

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

Then the trouble really begins. Secondary teachers seem to be much less satisfied with their work than their primary colleagues, and the same is true of students. (Batten, Griffin and Ainley, 1991, p 49. Hill, Holmes-Smith and Rowe, August 1993, p 13-14). Only a small minority of secondary students identify with the school's core intellectual mission. Many leave school with nothing like the skills, knowledge and attitudes required by documents such as the National Gaols, the Mayer competencies framework or the ACPs.

The present intention of providing more vocationally-oriented courses and pathways in Years 11 and 12 is clearly right for many, but the problem starts much earlier, and the scale of the job is much more daunting than in usually realised. One recent and authoritative study asked young members of the workforce how their post-compulsory schooling might have been made more relevant to their lives and needs. 'Their recommendations for reform', the researcher concluded, 'constitute an indictment of irrelevant discipline-based curriculum and insist on the importance of teacher attitudes ... (they) also constitute an urgent call for the provision of work experience programs which are more frequent, more flexible, more integrated into general schooling and which are for all students'. (Mellor, November 1993, p 76).

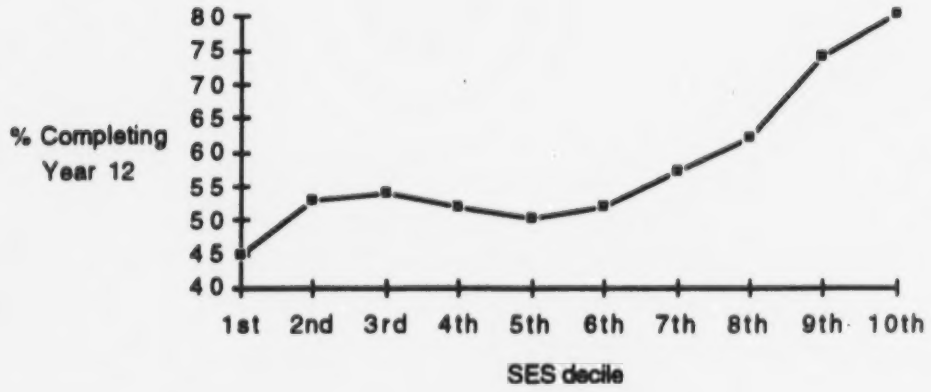
Statistics tell the same story. Australia has just about the smallest proportion of young people in vocational preparation of any OECD country, less than half the OECD average and only a quarter the proportion in countries such as Germany, Switzerland and Sweden. (Sweet, 1994). Numbers in traineeships remain very small, and the apprenticeship system has not grown appreciably either in numbers indentured or in numbers and kinds of occupations and industries involved. Since 1983 the proportion of 15-19 year-olds in schools has increased by more than 30% and in higher education by 65%. The proportion in initial vocational preparation has risen by 8%, despite a 52% fall in those engaged in full-time employment. (Sweet, 1994). Early indications are of a disappointing response from the private sector to the AVC work-study combinations.

Inequality

Problems in the distribution of success at school are generally criticised from a social or cultural point of view, especially by academics, and teachers. But there is a growing realisation, particularly in countries such as the UK and the US, that inequality and social division also hampers economic growth and stability. Employers are among those now inclined to see the reduction of educational inequality as an investment.

'Educational inequality' is much deeper than the National Report's statistics suggest, and according to one major study deepened between the 1970s and the early 1980s. (Williams, reported in Connell, White and Johnston, 1993, p 52). The job facing schools has been increased by sharp rises in income inequality in Australia since the early 1980s accompanied by a doubling of the proportion of children living in poverty to levels which are now 'particularly severe by international standards'. (Saunders and Matheson, June 1991, p 3).

Figure 2(a): Estimated Year 12 Completions by SES Decile, Australia 1989



Source: Connell, White, and Johnstone, 1991

Figure 2(b): Occupations of fathers of newly-enrolled students, Monash University (Clayton)

Occupation	% of entrants
Managerial	29
Professional	30
Trade	12
Para-professional	7
Clerical	3
Sales and service	5
Plant/machinery operative	3
Labourer	7
Home duties	1
Other	3

Source: Birrell, 1994

Australian schools and schools systems have been trying to reduce these social inequalities since the 1973 Karmel report. A recent OECD report suggests, however, that progress in Australia as elsewhere has been slow and limited at best. There have been modest gains by some groups, the OECD concludes, but 'over a longer time scale, cross-national, through-time comparisons of social mobility rates provide little comfort'. (OECD, 1993, p 62).

All school systems inherit the social inequalities and segregations of cities, but the Australian problem is compounded by the existence of an unusually large and publicly subsidised independent school sector which further reduces the social mix of public schools and creates small and relatively homogenous enclaves of social and educational advantage.

Present funding policies, including those within public systems, constitute another of the tap roots of inequality. In a very few cases such as the Netherlands and the province of Alberta, Canada, resources provided to schools correspond roughly with 'need', the size of the educational job to be done (see Figures 3[a] and 3[b], below). The Alberta formula is based on types of learning difficulty while in the Netherlands funds are allocated according to social rather than educational group membership. Both approaches are used in Australian public systems, but not in a comprehensive, system-wide way. In Australia as in most other parts of the world, public funding within public systems is at best relatively evenly spread between schools. Total funding is, moreover, much lower in both public and catholic systems than in independent schools.

Figure 3(a): Needs based resource allocation ratios, Edmonton (Canada).

Level	Ratio	Per student allocation 1992($c)	Illustration of learning needs to be satisfied at this level
1	1.00	3077	Students in regular kindergarten, primary, junior high or senior high program
2	1.27	3922	Students enrolled in primary or junior high who require differentiated programs of instruction; senior high other that learning needs at level ; English as a second language
3	1.55	4776	Students in trades and service programs
4	1.80	5550	Students with serious difficulties in academic learning who require special assistance
5	2.61	8019	Students enrolled in specialised facilities for the learning disabled
6	2.88	8861	Students in primary, junior high or senior high who are moderately mentally or physically handicapped
7	4.40	13523	Students who are behaviourally disordered, dependent handicapped, hearing impaired, multi-handicapped, physically handicapped, or visually impaired

Source: Caldwell, 1993

Figure 3(b):Resource index, Netherlands primary schools

Index (Baseline = 1)	Student category
1.25	Dutch, low SES
1.4	Bargee
1.7	Traveller
1.9	Ethnic minorities

Source: OECD, 1994

One upshot, rarely noted and certainly not part of the conventional account of schooling is that public funding to education is regressive. Success in schooling and therefore longer educational careers in the best-funded courses and higher public subsidies go disproportionately to those of greatest private means. The entailed higher lifetime earnings and other benefits compound the inequities. A second source of regressiveness may exist in various kinds of private supplementation via fees, donations, fund-raising, investments, commercial activities, and so on, which probably favour schools in suburbs where parents are relatively well off.

Restructuring schools

Efforts to restructure schools and school systems are increasingly criticised on the ground that 'reform stops at the classroom door', even though the classroom is where reform is really needed. (The conventional account of schooling can be criticised in the same way as having little to say about the core business of schools, the educational process).

One noted exponent of this view is Al Shanker, leader of the giant American Teachers Federation, who recorded his changing views about the kinds of changes needed in schools in this way:

> It has become quite clear to me that what I had believed — which is that all you had to do was raise salaries, reduce class size, and reduce authoritarianism — was not the case. I had faith in schools as they are, but now I see they need to be very different ... minor changes will not bring about the improvements we need in schools ... changes have to be major: the kinds of changes that take place in a factory when they move away from the assembly line model. (Shanker, 1989, p 11, p 16).

Shanker's arguments can be easily translated into the terminology of workplace and industry restructuring, and indeed Shanker argues that 'the teacher needs to think of students as workers to find different kinds of work the students can do to achieve

the gaol'. (Shanker, 1989, p 12). Like any other workers, the quality and rate of production (learning) by students is affected not just by the quality of supervision or management (ie teaching) but also by the design of the work process and the workplace. The schooling workplace, in Shanker's argument, produces learning inefficiently, and, much more important, of the wrong kinds. This is not to contest the claim that teachers have markedly different impacts, for good and for ill. It is to suggest that the task is to increase the proportion of highly effective teachers *and* to find quite new and much more cost-effective models of schooling.

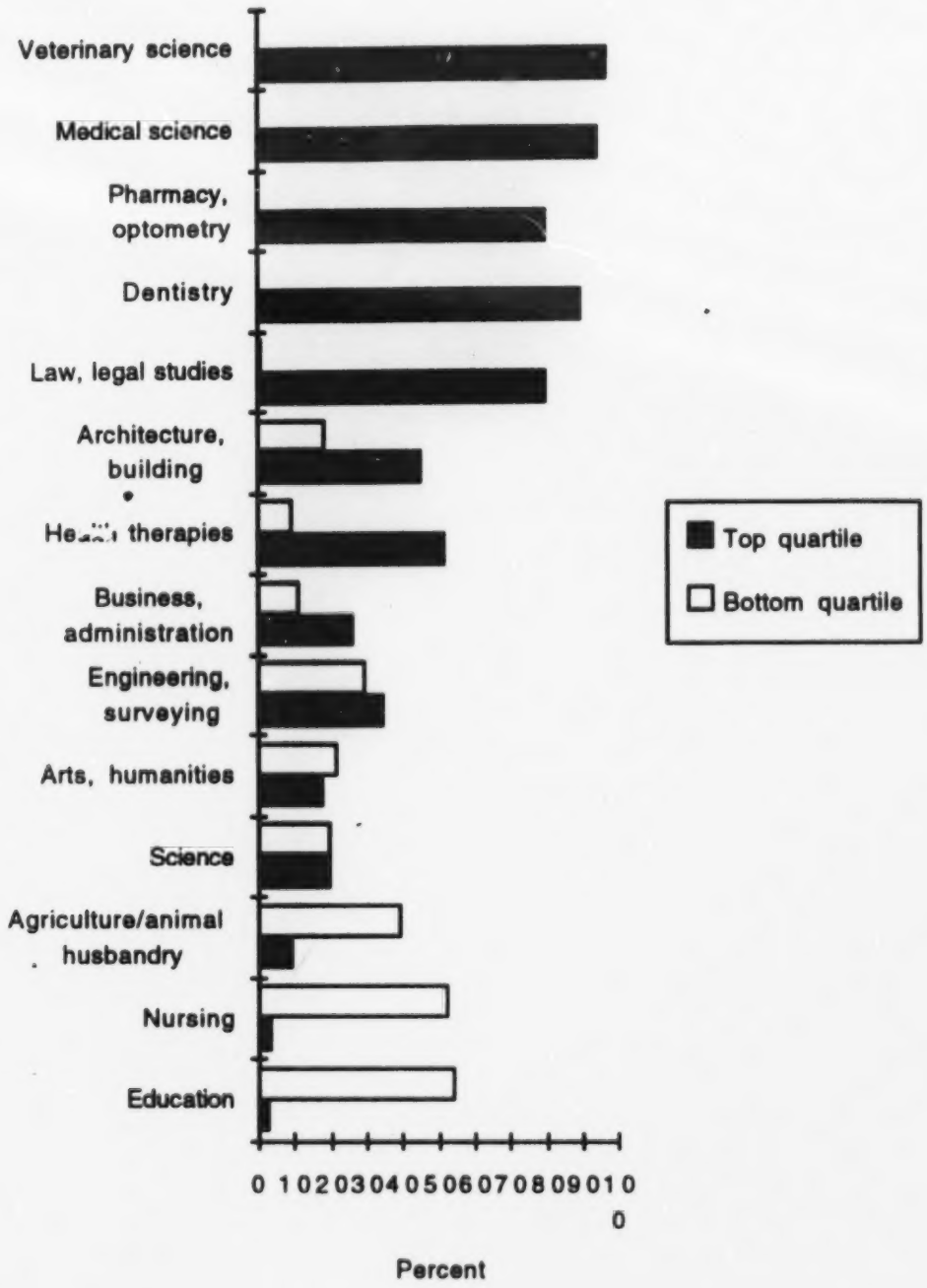
Very few Australian teachers think of the schools or school change in these terms, but most hold a compatible view. They want students to be learners of learning, managers of and responsible for a process which is 'active' rather than 'passive' and is achieved via a variety of strategies, learning materials and working relationships. Most teachers believe that schools offer this kind of learning only sporadically or exceptionally. They agree, in essence, with the pungent (and wilfully misconstrued) remark by the late Garth Boomer that teachers spend far too much time teaching "low-level crap". Some argue that the familiar organisers of learning, the 45-minute lesson, the class, the subject, norm-referenced assessment, and so on are the wrong tools for the job that now needs to be done. In short, they are looking for workplace reform.

The problem is that schools have not been able to find ways of 'engineering' these sentiments. The first substantial attempt to do so, the National Project on the Quality of Teaching and Learning, was successful only in revealing that current ways of organising student day are the upshot of knotted relationships between inherited work practices, industrial conventions and agreements, patterns of regulation and authority (particularly in the large systems), and expectations of students and parents, and are therefore very difficulty to change.

The workforce

Teachers are an aging group. Between 1963 and 1989 the proportion of teachers aged between 31 and 50 years almost doubled, from 34% to 65%. (Logan et al, 1990, p 3). Many of the most able and energetic teachers leave the profession, some with the help of a redundancy package. The profession has a very low capacity to attract able replacements, as Figure 4 suggests.

Figure 4: Percent of top and bottom quartile scorers commencing undergraduate courses by field of study, 1989



Source: ABS, 1992

Less than half of one sample of new teachers held a positive view of their recently-completed training. (Batten, Griffin and Ainley, 1991, p 16). Another survey, of teachers' attitudes toward in-service education, also found widespread dissatisfaction. Criticisms of programs ranged from 'low follow-through and recall' to 'lack of long-term and systematic planning'. (Bluer, 1989, p 4).

Many teachers are heartily sick of change and talk of change. Too much of it has been half-baked, faddish, a thinly-disguised political agenda, or simply another name for more work. (Schools Council, 1992, p 3). Trust and confidence in system authorities is very low. In government systems, the combination of de-zoning with big increases in 'retention kids' and the integration of students with disabilities has inflamed old resentments at the fact that government and non-government schools play by different rules.

System change

In this perspective it needs to be asked whether the government systems are (in the words of the former head of one government school system) in a process of degeneration or transformation. (Angus, November 1992, p 1).

There has been a disabling rate of turnover in senior leaders and, perhaps even more debilitating, in the structure of jobs and lines of authority, not least because ministers and governments now intervene to an un-precedented degree in the conduct of schooling. (Beare, September 1989, p 9. Caldwell, 1993, p 9). Strategic planning is needed as never before, but planning is so closely linked to the life cycle of governments that the maximum available time horizon is two years.

Moreover, system authorities are strapped for cash. The quantum of public funding to schooling has been maintained, but costs have not. Almost all of the schooling budget is spent on paying a workforce which is unionised and tenured. Discretionary spending is therefore reduced to a trickle. It is almost impossible to drive a large system or a change agenda without resources to encourage, reward, and if necessary sanction, even in those cases where leadership is outstanding. Like a profit-less enterprise, a public system with few discretionary resources lacks both steerage and the capacity to energise, and system authorities therefore lack authority. Pressure from government, however, means that systems endlessly proclaim changes which can not be properly effected. Too often, governments and their officials are 'entrapped' and 'engage in constantly tinkering around the edges'. (Angus, November 1992, p 6).

Policy

This alternative account implies that current policies for schooling are inadequate. At least four major thrusts are called for:

- o targets, especially for improved quality, levels and distribution of student attainment;

- o workplace and workforce reform;
- o re-structuring the organisation and control of schooling; and
- o substantial increases in resources and an overhaul of resourcing mechanisms.

These objectives could not be pursued separately, and taken together would amount to a national strategy for restructuring the schooling industry.

1. Targets

Targets for achievement are good for the performance of institutions and systems as well as students. They set expectations, and provide the basis for rewards and sanctions.

It is now possible, for the first time, to set targets for the school system in the one thing that really matters, the quality, speed and distribution of student learning, and to monitor the performance against targets. In particular, wide-scale assessments can now capture the kinds of complex cognitive development schools now aim for, and are moving toward being able to monitor learning of personal and social capacities as well.

National targets should be set in relation to student attainment across the full 12 years of schooling, a range of learning areas, and for the short, medium and long-term. These should include narrowing the currently unacceptable gap between the highest and lowest levels of achievement as well as improving the highest levels of attainment, the proportion achieving well, and the social patterning of achievement.

The ACPs provide the basis for targets and monitoring in the compulsory years. Exit assessments should include measures of competence along the 'Mayer' lines as well as the more familiar results of Year 12 assessments. International comparisons should also be used.

2. Workplace and workforce reform

A national strategy needs an educational vision as well as educational targets. This has been absent from recent attempts to imagine workplace reform which have focused instead on teachers, on the school, or on school systems. In schooling as in other industries, however, the major focus of reform should be the core processes and the core workforce. In schools that is the learning process, and students.

As the Schools Council recently put it, 'school communities need to re-conceptualise the means by which they go about the task of educating children'. (Schools Council, 1992, page 7). Students need a workplace and work tasks, objectives, relationships, rewards, and sanctions in their normal working day which deliver not simply more efficient learning but the *kinds* of learning required now and in the future.

The touchstone for change should not be smaller classes, or 'effectiveness' (which has dominated talk of school improvement for past 15 years/so), but *cost*-effectiveness. The concept of productivity adapted to the circumstances of schooling would focus attention for the first time on the rate of transformation of resources (including student time) into valued learning. (Ashenden 1990, Levin 1989, Marginson 1981).

As noted earlier, the very limited progress of schools working within the National Schools Project suggests that translating ideas such as these into practice has scarcely begun. Experience so far suggests that workplace reform will include:

(1) Much greater engagement of the time and energy of students, the most under-utilised of educational resources. Students can contribute to others' learning as 'peer and cross-age tutors' and through 'learning teams' as well as to their own progress by being 'managers' of their own time and activity. It would be difficult to exaggerate either the scale or the importance of such changes in culture, roles, and organisation of schools.

(2) Greatly strengthened connections between what students set out to learn (objectives), the tasks they undertake, and the evaluation of and reflection on progress. Also needed are stronger connections between the size and composition of student groups and the kinds and amounts of teaching time and effort allocated to them.

(3) Much greater use of 'learning resources', including the familiar books and other printed materials, but increasingly tasks, information and feedback delivered by information and communications technologies.

(4) A culture of optimism about and confidence in the capacity of almost all students to learn much better and faster than is now regarded as 'normal', and about the capacity of children and young people to take much more responsibility for learning as well as for the good conduct of the school-workplace than is now usual.

Such changes in the work and workplace of students imply change in work and work practices of paid employees. Industrial and other arrangements would have to *encourage* very different work practices, employment conditions and staffing structures, together with different resource mixes. Many decisions about these matters need to be made at the site level. Early experience with new information and communications technologies in schooling suggests that the proportion of expenditure on materials and equipment will rise, perhaps substantially.

3. Change in governing structures

Professional and industrial systems, bureaucratic and political structures, and the market, all play a part in the operation of the Australian school system.

The general outlines of reform of professional and industrial structures can be be glimpsed in the experience of other industries. The key idea is the enterprise agreement, where the enterprise is neither a school system (as is currently the case) nor, in most cases, an individual school. Examination of the rules governing access to and the work of the teaching profession might follow the example provided by recent Industry Commission reviews of the legal and accountancy professions. In any event, much more flexibility in entry to and departure from the profession is required, as is a more differentiated workforce and reward structure.

It is more difficult to see what needs to be done in relation to systems of control. It is clear that bureaucracies of kind which persisted un-challenged up to 1960s are no longer appropriate. Most proposals for their replacement involve greater use of market mechanisms and/or management techniques developed by organisations operating in markets. A good deal of this talk has been naive and simplistic. Proponents have often failed to think seriously about the nature of schools or their moral and intellectual purposes. Opponents have often assumed that markets and the skills of those working in them are either wholly irrelevant to schools or in their nature corrupt and corrupting, and have fantasized schools which can somehow operate on a logic different from, even in opposition to, that which increasingly governs life around them

It seems clear, first, that a simple market model focussing on competition between schools for custom is unlikely to produce a schooling system (as opposed to some schools) of high quality, and may even exaggerate the inequalities of quality and outcomes characteristic of centralised, bureaucratic systems.

But there are other ways in which markets and skills developed in them might be adapted to schooling. One possibility would be to experiment with an approach now used in some other Australian public institutions (transport systems, prisons, hospitals) and put the administration of groups of schools out to competitive tender. Another possibility, a little further away from the market, would be to use the 'case load' approach to funding now being introduced to the health care industry. Yet another would see schools compete much more strongly for teachers, principals and other staff, and for public esteem and professional recognition. This would imply, of course, that teachers and other employees would also compete more strongly for clearer rewards and sanctions than those operating now, and would therefore need more control over their work, and better feedback and support than is now usual.

Most difficult (and, perhaps, important) to imagine are significant changes in the relationship between the political sphere and schooling. The present close linkage between governments, annual budgets and triennial election cycles (on the one hand) and schooling (on the other) is not working well. It is also true, however, that Commonwealth's experiment with the Schools Commission suggests that the Westminster system finds difficulty in dispensing large quantities of public money through statutory bodies. It may be that the careful

use of market mechanisms such as competitive tendering would achieve that greater independence of schooling from the vagaries of politics sought by many who have believed that 'public' education is necessarily free of any taint of the market.

4. Resources

Additional resources by themselves will achieve little or no improvement in the outcomes of schooling. It is also true, however, that changes of the kind suggested above could not be carried without substantial increases in resources, for three reasons.

First, the independent schools set the standard for resourcing and for 'good schooling' which applies, like it or not, to the whole community. The typical independent school has at least $1.50 to spend on each student for every $1 available in government schools and perhaps as little as $0.70 in the catholic systemic schools. Progress toward getting all schools on the same footing as the standard-setters would arrest and gradually reverse the steady declines of the past decade or so in expenditure on schooling as a proportion of expenditure on education, of public outlays, and of GDP. Fully achieved, it would bring expenditure on schooling to around 5.1% of GDP, roughly equal to current levels in Sweden.

Second, if it is accepted that one of the major problems in schooling is under-achievement by a considerable proportion of students, some way must be found to re-distribute resources. There is no prospect of introducing needs-based funded by taking from some to give to others. Redistribution can only be achieved in the context of an overall increase in resources.

Third, any major change program needs substantial lubrication, for research and development, to achieve a big turnover in staff, for professional re-training and development, to provide incentives for change, and to achieve a very different industrial regime.

Increases of the scale suggested could not and should not be provided from the public purse alone. As noted earlier, public expenditure on schooling is regressive, a fact which can only be tackled by taking formal account of private inputs and balancing them off against public inputs so as to achieve an total expenditure geared to need. To put the point another way: government schools in the more affluent suburbs and districts are unlikely to stand idly by while resources to other schools rise. They would (and already do) resort to private subsidy. The best way to manage such problems would be to use techniques for needs-based administration of public-private funding mixes developed in the 30 years since Karmel. In short, a funding model along the lines now used in non-government systems could be extended to include all schools.

Such a move, it should be emphasised, would not so much change the status quo as regularise it. All schools in Australia subsist on some combination of public and private resources, and all schools are both 'government' and 'non-

government' in their funding and management, though these facts are generally concealed by 'government' schools and systems. The suggestion offered here is to acknowledge the facts and turn them to the purposes of egalitarian reform.

An achievable agenda?

The main thing to consider here is not particular proposals but the scale of the whole. Even if desirable, is it realistic? Change of this order has been seen in education. Precedents include the construction the great public systems a century or more ago, the Karmel reforms of the early 1970s, and the current re-configuration of the training system (in Australia), and recent reforms in New Zealand and the UK. 'Industry restructuring' in areas such as Australian manufacturing might also be regarded as precedents.

At the same time it is important to acknowledge that as well as calling for a reconfiguration of the learning process and its very entrenched work practices, the proposals above tackle three of the basic fault lines of Australian schooling: the division of responsibility between the states/territories and the commonwealth; the separation of government and non-government schooling sectors; and the oppositional relationship between employers and employees. Moreover, these proposals would have to be advanced in a society which is aging, is increasingly sceptical about what education can deliver, and showing no inclination to depart from its low tax regime.

No major reform package would be credible or successful, therefore, if it did not include in its foundations something like a compact in which the stakeholders commit to a good deal of give as well as take, with progress in each area was contingent on progress in others. This would be easier to achieve but much less effective if confined to particular states or territories.

Nor would a major reform package be successful if it did not include compelling arguments about why such a different approach to schooling is needed, and how it would return, with interest, any additional investments made. These arguments would focus, in the main, on what kind of social order Australians want to have a generation from now, and especially about what kinds of inequality and public culture we want, and what kinds and levels of inequality we can afford. The economic arguments would be, in the main, indirect, bearing on the kinds of social and cultural infrastructure needed to underwrite a successful, international economy.

Implications for policy on schooling

Which of the two very different views presented here is correct? To a considerable extent, both are. The choice between them is not so much about the facts of the matter as a judgement about what is a fair and useful basis for evaluating schools and their achievements, and what is achievable in the future.

The first account sets Australian schooling alongside its own past and its international peers. It represents a judgement that the future and the past are essentially continuous and/or that it is unrealistic to push for bigger or faster changes than those now under way. The second account, by contrast, uses the future as its benchmark, and asserts that the future holds much larger possibilities and demands than those experienced so far.

The judgement is an important one to make. The NIEF's main statement of policy on schooling ('Improving Australia's Schools) may help to illustrate the need to bite bullets.

The statement endorses many items from the current agenda, and welcomes 'the (current) broad agenda of reforms aimed at bringing about improvements' in schooling. It calls for such specific and modest changes as the alignment of starting ages and transition from primary to secondary schooling, the specification of expected learning outcomes and life competencies, a nationally consistent approach to Year 12 certification, improved selection and appointment of principals, better careers education, and so on.

The same document, however, also calls for 'world's best standards in the quality of curriculum, in what is expected of students and in what is achieved by them', and for other very substantial changes as well.

These are *very* large ambitions, much nearer in scale and temper to the second of the two accounts given here than the first. But pre-requisites to achievement including resource levels and arrangements, the organisation of the learning process, the problem of inequality, and political and industrial obstacles to change, are not addressed. In these circumstances, the call for 'world's best standards' is little more than rhetorical, and invites the cynicism of a workforce suspicious of business and change alike.

But perhaps the objective is the right one? If so, it needs to be backed by a comprehensive plan and a clear commitment to a very big task and a long haul, first in getting the basic idea accepted, and then in making it work.

Sources

Anderson, Don, 1992. The interaction of public and private school systems, *Australian Journal of Education*, 36:3.

Anderson, Don, March 1994. Choice and markets in schooling: some issues in Australia, *Unicorn*, 20:1.

Angus, Max, November 1992. School systems in transition: the future of government school education in Australia, Inaugural Professorial Lecture, Edith Cowan University.

Angus, Max, June 1993. Ambiguity and compromise: making a virtue of necessity in school reform, in J Wallace and W Louden (eds), *Leaders Among the Learners*, Perth.

Applied Psychology Research Group, University of Melbourne, 1990. *Teacher stress in Victoria: a survey of teachers views*, Office of Schools Administration, Melbourne.

Ashenden, Dean, June 1990. Award restructuring and productivity in the future of schooling: 1990 Frank Tate Memorial Lecture, *VIER Bulletin*, 64.

Australian Bureau of Statistics, 1992. *Education and training in Australia*, cat. no. 4224.0, Canberra.

Australian Education Council, 1992. *National report on schooling in Australia, 1992*, Melbourne.

Australian Education Council, 1992. *National report on schooling in Australia, 1992: Annex*, Melbourne.

Batten, Margaret, Mark Griffin and John Ainley, 1991. *Recently recruited teachers: their views and experiences of preservice education, professional development, and teaching*, Canberra.

Beare, Hedley, September 1989. Educational administration in the 1990s, paper to the 1989 ACEA conference, University of New England.

Birrell, R, 1994. Reported in *Campus Review Weekly*, June 23-29.

Bluer, Robert, July 1989. Teacher Quality and Career Development, background paper prepared for a Schools Council seminar.

Caldwell, Brian J, September 1993. Leading the transformation of Australia's schools, William Walker Oration, ACEA/ASPA Conference, Adelaide.

Caldwell, Brian J, June 1993. *Decentralising the management of schools in Australia,* Melbourne.

Connell, R W, V M White and K M Johnstone 1993. *Running twice as hard: the Disadvantaged Schools Program in Australia,* Geelong.

Davis, Bruce, October 1990. Restructuring the Tasmanian Department of Education and the Arts, paper to conference of the US-Australia Education Policy Project, Wollongong.

Edwards, Tony and Geoff Whitty, March 1994. Parental choice and school autonomy: the English experience, *Unicorn,* 20:1.

Hanushek, Eric A, March 1994. Costs, incentives and student performance, paper to the conference on Public Investment in School Education: Costs and Outcomes, Canberra.

Hill, Peter W, June 1994. Putting the national profiles to use, *Unicorn*, 20:2.

Hill, Peter W, Philip Holmes-Smith and Kenneth J Rowe, August 1993. *School and teacher effectiveness: key findings from Phase 1 of the Victorian Quality of Schools Project,* University of Melbourne.

Keating, Jack, 1994. *Post-compulsory education and training: a critical perspective on national and international developments,* IARTV, Melbourne.

Levin, Henry M, Spring 1989. Cost-effectiveness and educational policy, *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis,* vol 10, no. 1.

Logan, L, N Dempster, D Chant and M Warry, 1990. *Teachers in Australian schools: trends in the service 1963-1989,* Canberra.

Maglen, Leo, Phillip McKenzie, Gerald Burke and Barry McGaw, 1994. Investment in education and training, in Business Council of Australia, *Investing in Australia's future: achieving the Australia 2010 vision,* Melbourne.

Marginson, Simon, November 1991. Productivity in the non-market services: some issues and problems, paper to the Labour Economics and Productivity Conference, University of Melbourne.

Masters, Geoff N, 1991. *Assessing achievement in Australian schools*, Melbourne.

MCEETYA, April 1994. Report on progress with implementation of the Australian vocational Certificate, paper 1/3.2.1/1, Sydney.

McRae, David, May 1993. *Reforming school work organisation: a report for the CERI Teacher Quality Case Study Strand,* DEET.

Mellor, Suzanne, November 1993. Former student opinion on the relevance of schooling to work, *Unicorn*, 19:4.

Morrow, Ann, March 1994. Speech to open the conference on Public Investment in School Education: Costs and Outcomes, Canberra.

National Industry Education Forum, nd. *Improving Australia's schools: building the foundation for a better Australia*, Melbourne.

OECD, 1993. *Access, participation and equity*, Paris.

OECD, 1994. *Children and Youth at Risk*, Paris.

Queensland Department of Education, Review and Evaluation Directorate, 1991. *The provision of teacher professional development in a devolving education system*, DEET.

Rogan, Frank, March 1994. Choice of marketing in schooling — a Catholic viewpoint, *Unicorn*, 20:1.

Saunders, Peter and George Matheson, June 1991. *An ever-rising tide? Poverty in Australia in the eighties*, Social Policy Research Centre, University of New South Wales.

Schools Council, July 1989. *Teacher quality and development: a background paper for the seminar on teacher quality and career development*, Canberra.

Schools Council, December 1990. *Australia's teachers: an agenda for the next decade*, Canberra.

Schools Council, August 1992. *Developing flexible strategies in the early years of schooling: purposes and possibilities, Project Paper no. 5*, Canberra.

Schools Council, February 1993. *In the middle: schooling for young adolescents*, Canberra.

Schools Council, March 1994. *Education and Training for 16-18 year olds: some reflections from Europe*, Canberra.

Schools Council, 1994. *The role of schools in the vocational preparation of Australia's senior secondary students: discussion paper*, Canberra.

Snook, Ivan, March 1994. Choice and market theory in education: the New Zealand experience, *Unicorn*, 20:1.

Shanker, Al, 1989. On restructuring schools: a conversation with Al Shanker, *Educational Leadership*, 47:7.

Sweet, Richard, 1994. Current trends in vocational education and training, personal communication.

Teese, Richard, March 1994. Evaluating school systems: provider versus client perspectives on performance, paper to the conference on Public Investment in School Education: Costs and Outcomes, Canberra.